

[NOTE ON REV. CANON DRIVER'S ARTICLE,
ENTITLED, "MAGNA EST VERITAS ET
PRÆVALET."]

IN the EXPOSITOR for June, 1898, I observe, under the above title, a summary sketch of recent views as to the "reconciliation" of the first chapter of Genesis with the development of the earth in geological time, and in this courteous references are made to my published works on the subject, though Dr. Driver holds very different views as to the cosmic value and correctness of the venerable document in question.

In my present condition of infirm health I have neither power nor disposition to reopen these questions, but desire to state in a few words my continued adherence to the principles of interpretations and comparison which I maintained as long ago as 1860 in my book entitled *Archæia*, and which are more fully stated and supported in my subsequent work, *The Origin of the World*. I would also desire to define my actual position as distinguished from that of a mere "reconciler."

In regard, then, to the "proem" or introduction to Genesis, I believe it to be in the highest and most complete sense a divine revelation communicated to some ancient seer, and not intended to teach geology or any other science, but to give such a general outline of the actual plan and true order of creation as might form a basis for a pure monotheistic religion, and for the divine programme of the plan of redemption contained in the following books of the Old and New Testament. It was further intended to guard the people of God against the seductions of nature-worship and fanciful polytheistic myths, as well as to bring them near the Creator as the Father of His intelligent creatures. These great objects it has continued to

serve in all the intervening ages, and among peoples both rude and civilized. It is still carrying its great intellectual and spiritual light into the minds of the newest converts from heathenism. In regard to science, its influence has been wholly beneficial, by its teaching the unity of nature under the law of the great creative and sustaining Will, and thereby removing mere chance and superstitious fancies out of the way.

I have explained the absolute necessity of such a revelation of origins, and such a gathering of all the materials of ancient idolatry under one creative power, in the *Origin of the World*, 6th edition, 1893, chapters i., ii., iii., and appendices A to N. This recent edition it is possible Dr. Driver may not have seen.

In so far as the interpretation of the word is concerned, we have the text in very good condition, and there are few verbal difficulties except in the precise meaning of certain words which the writer has occasion to use in different senses, as, for instance, the words "earth" and "clay," but he has usually defined their meaning. There are also a few inaccurate translations which have come down to us by tradition, as, for instance, "firmament," "moving things," "whales," "sea monsters." It will also be observed that the theory of an inspired revelation frees us to some extent from the necessity of discussing questions of date and authorship, as a revelation might be communicated when it was most needed, or when a suitable medium was present. On this, however, I would make the following remarks:

1st. The appropriate chronological place of the creation record is at the beginning of the whole Bible. 2nd. Its entire want of local or national colouring, its simple majesty, and its freedom from superstitious accretions accredit it to us as an original document, and render it extremely improbable that it could have been condensed

from the florid and mythical creation stories of Babylonia and Assyria.

On the other hand, it is impossible to suppose that the introduction to Genesis could originate in any mere "Semitic cosmological speculations,"¹ since we know that nothing so terse, accurate, and intelligible could be produced in that way in our time. Even Darwin, in speculating on the first introduction of life, was obliged to quote the words of this old document, though less correctly than if he had been more familiar with its scope and contents.

Finally, I concur in the fine old aphorism with which Dr. Driver heads his article, but would prefer to be allowed to read the closing verb in the future tense, and to hold it to predict that the truth of the Old Testament in its cosmogony, history and prophecy, will prevail when the objections derived from modern science shall have vanished away. (See 1 Cor. iii. 19.)

J. WILLIAM DAWSON.

¹ See my articles on "Creative Development, etc.," *EXPOSITOR*, 1898.